

Olivet Nazarene University Digital Commons @ Olivet

Faculty Scholarship – Library Science

Library

2-1994

Patron Objections to Library Materials: A Survey of Christian College Libraries Part II

Craighton Hippenhammer

Olivet Nazarene University, chhammer@olivet.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/lsci_facp



Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), and the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hippenhammer, Craighton. "Patron Objections to Library Materials: a Survey of Christian College Libraries Part II." *The Christian Librarian* 37:2 (1994): 40-47.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Library at Digital Commons @ Olivet. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Scholarship – Library Science by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Olivet. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@olivet.edu.

**Patron Objections to Library Materials:
A Survey of Christian College Libraries
Part II**

**by
Craighton Hippenhammer**

The previous issue of the Christian Librarian contained the findings of this intellectual freedom survey along with comments and recommendations. This article, part two of the survey, contains a listing of titles challenged, comparisons with other surveys, a sample collection development policy's censorship subsection and a sample reconsideration form.

Titles Challenged

Some 89 titles were challenged at 44 sites (out of the 91 in the survey) over two years. Following is a complete list of the titles or description of titles (when titles were unavailable) that were challenged. Titles appear more than once only if they appear under more than one subject heading.

Sex:

Allen Ginsburg (photographs)

The Ancient Child by N. Scott Momaday

Andy Warhol Prints by Frayda Feldman

Art books

An art journal

Art Journal, 1992, 3 issues

Art Journal, 2 issues on censorship

Art of Photography, 1839-1989 by Mike Weaver

An article about rubbers

Behind Closed Doors: A Marriage Manual by Robin Schwartz

Bodyworks (videotape)

A book on abortion (too explicit)

A book showing male nudity

Chicago Reader (newspaper)

A Clockwork Orange (videotape)

Closely Watched Trains (videotape)

Counseling for Sexual Disorders by Joyce Penner and Clifford Penner

Distastefully graphic art book

Forever by Judy Blume

Forever Marilyn by Marie Cahill

The Joy of Sex; a CordonBleu Guide to Lovemaking (Updated Edition) by Alexander Comfort

The Last Tycoon (videotape)

Man's Body: an Owner's Manual (Simon & Schuster, 1977)

More Joy of Sex: A Lovemaking Companion to the Joy of Sex by Alexander Comfort

One of our art journals

Photographs of a nude woman

Romance novel of the Harlequin series

Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue

Time (pictures from Madonna's book Sex)

Vanity Fair (periodical)

Homosexual Sex:

Arts Magazine (contained Mapplethorpe series)

Daddy's Roommate by Michael Willhoite

Daughters of Sarah by the People's Christian Coalition

Heather Has Two Mommies by Leslea Newman

Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times by Tom Horner

Mapplethorpe

Photographs of homosexuals

A sociological study of homosexuality

Pro-homosexual book

Sex Education for Children:

A book on sex education

Miracle of Life (videotape for high school students) by Carl A. Lofman et al.

Who Made Me? by Malcolm Doney and Meryl Doney

Violence:

Chocolate War (juvenile book) by Robert Cormier

The Bone Wars by Kathryn Lasky

Satanism, New Age, Witchcraft, Occult:

A book with a witch portraying evil as good

A children's book on Halloween

A children's Halloween book depicting witches

Counseling tapes

Encyclopedia material on occult/witchcraft

Gaia, a New Look at Life on Earth by J. E. Lovelock

Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion by Sir James George Frazer

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by C.S. Lewis

Neo-Pagan Witchcraft by Aidan A. Kelly

Relaxation, mind communication and other subliminal tapes

Romance novel of the Zondervan Serenade series

The Sorcerer's Apprentice, as told by Felicity Trotman

Star Wars novels

Steven King novels

The Witch Who Went for a Walk by Margaret Hiller

Cults:

Books by cult authors

Miscellaneous "Christian" non-fiction

Religion/Theology:

A book with heretical statements

A Christian critique of professional psychology

The Gods of Greece by Arianna Stassinopoulos and Roloff Beny

Journal of Christian Reconstruction

Youth '92 (periodical)

Non-Christian Views:

Art in America (periodical)

A book on homosexuality

The Brand New Monty Python Bok (Sic)

The Humanist (periodical)

A magazine for Christian youth

Marriage and Alternatives: Exploring Intimate Relationships by Roger Libby

Psychology Today (periodical)

Vanity Fair (periodical)

Language:

AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism by Douglas Crimp

Ground Zero by Andrew Holleran

Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan

The Kitchen Knight: A Tale of King Arthur by Margaret Hodges

Sex and the American Teenager by Robert Coles and Geoffrey Stokes

Tough Love by Mill Milliken (audio cassette)

Evolution:

Children's books containing evolutionary concepts

Sexist:

Sports Illustrated swimsuit edition

Poorly Written:

Book full of grammatical mistakes

Other/General/Nonspecific:

Black Heart by Eric Van Lustbader

Don Quixote by Miquel de Cervantes

The Group by Mary McCarthy

For Laughing Out Loud: Poems to Tickle Your Funny Bone compiled by Jack Prelutsky

Psychology Today (periodical)

R-rated video

Comparisons

Institutions of higher education are under the impression that they do not have censorship problems. It may be that secular colleges and universities find library censorship to be a dead issue, or perhaps other issues like freedom of the student press and political correctness are taking their attention instead. The fact that little research about intellectual freedom in such settings is being conducted substantiates the generally held belief that academic institutions are above the fray, immune to censorship pressures. Their unexamined presumption of innocence may prove to be over-optimistic.

The Philadelphia Survey

I had hoped to compare my survey to surveys of other colleges and universities taken within the last decade, but due to the dearth of research material, I had to widen my time frame. It is hardly fair to compare this Christian college survey to others that are more than ten years old. However, for a general frame of reference, I mention the following survey.

In 1973, a survey examined four public libraries, three college libraries and five

university libraries (mostly secular in nature) in the Philadelphia area for their handling of controversial adult materials.ⁱ None of the university and college libraries surveyed had written book selection policies and none had significant censorship confrontations in recent years. All reported no official restriction policies other than for rarity and/or vulnerability to theft. Their collections were compared with a list of eight periodicals and 25 books of a controversial nature, including materials on the radical right and radical left, homosexual behavior, interracial sex, political violence, and certain books written by practitioners whose work for different reasons was not accepted by their professions. One of the survey's conclusions was that "books that challenge conventional sexual mores meet with more caution, anxiety, and defensiveness from our selecting and/or administrative librarians than books that challenge prevalent political values and practices."ⁱⁱ The Christian college survey confirms this finding 20 years later even while considerable progress has been made in getting librarians to put their selection policies in writing and to put challenge procedures in those policies.

The Philadelphia survey's comment that "public libraries are more vulnerable to direct attack by organized community elements, whereas college and university censorship problems are usually internal and frequently unpublicized"ⁱⁱⁱ no doubt is still true. The survey also concluded that "relatively favorable book budgets are no guarantee that the library's collection will include controversial materials in any significant quantities...."^{iv} It could be argued that patterns of selection that continuously exclude controversial materials are really only patterns that are including other materials authorized by the selection policy. Of course, such patterns could also be called pre-censorship. How much pre-censorship takes place in academic

institutions is unknown. But lack of publicity about library censorship cases in academic institutions doesn't mean that they don't exist.

The Canadian Prairie Survey

In 1989 a survey of 47 postsecondary educational institutions in the three prairie Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta examined several key issues concerning library censorship.^v This Canadian survey claims to be the first comprehensive study of censorship in academic libraries in either Canada or the United States, which very well might be true. A study of three Canadian provinces is hardly comprehensive, but it is the best that I've found that makes a good comparison to my survey.

The Canadian survey's return rate was a high 69 percent, compared to 74.6 percent return response received with my Christian college survey. Thirty percent of the Canadian institutions reported censorship incidents over six years (1980-1985) versus 48.4 percent over two years (1991-1992) in this Christian college survey, a significant difference.

However: the Canadian survey found that 40 percent of the complaints came from students and faculty, 20 percent from administrators and 40 percent (!) from library staff. The difference between the number of institutions having censorship problems (30 percent to 48.4 percent between the two surveys) can probably be put to the numbers of students raising objections. The Christian college survey showed that 80 percent of sites noting a censorship incident mentioned students as a source. Only 20.5 percent of challengers were professors in the Christian college survey; 4.6 percent were administrators; and 2.3 percent were librarians.

School libraries and public libraries do a much better job at having a censorship

challenge section in their collection development policies as noted below. While 50 percent of Christian college libraries have a written challenge policy, only 21 percent of Canadian prairie academic libraries have one. During a challenge, Christian college libraries follow their policies 41.8 percent of the time; Canadian libraries, one third of the time.

When an academic library is challenged, what is the result? Christian colleges retain the challenged resources 61.1 percent of the time; Canadian colleges retain them 40 percent of the time. Of the Canadian libraries that had written selection policies, 10.3 percent reported cases in which the policy actually expedited censoring activities rather than preventing them. No such results were reported in the Christian college survey.

The Canadian prairie survey polled secular university libraries, community and technical college libraries and libraries of religious institutions. One weakness of the survey is that it did not break out the results by type of academic institution, which would have shed more light on this comparison.

The Four Southern States Survey

There may be some value in comparing the Christian college survey with recent surveys taken of public schools and public libraries. In fact, I designed my survey around two such surveys taken in the last eight years, using similar wording in many cases. There is an educational continuum from grade school and high school to college, and there is a similar concern for nurture in both K-12 schools and Christian colleges. Public libraries usually reflect the values of the communities in which they exist; the Christian subculture is pervasive

throughout the United States and Canada.

About eight years ago, a major intellectual freedom survey was undertaken in the South that studied censorship questions in public schools and public libraries in four states -- Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee -- from December, 1984, to February, 1985.^{vi} Since the South is considered more conservative than the North, this survey should produce some interesting comparisons.

The Southern Survey was mailed out to 5,023 libraries, and 1,127 or 22.4 percent were returned. The survey's statement, "For this kind of mailed survey, anything over 20 percent is considered a good response,"^{vii} puts the 74.6 percent Christian college survey return rate in perspective.

Christian college libraries have less policies proportionately (72.5 percent) than do Southern public libraries (85.6 percent) or public schools (90.4 percent). Of those who have a policy, only 68.2 percent of the Christian college policies are written, while 93.8 percent of the public libraries' are and 92.1 percent of the schools' are. Policies that have been adopted by the board show considerable variation: public libraries, 90.6 percent; public schools, 73.2 percent; Christian colleges, 13.6 percent.

When challenges to library materials happen, 61.9 percent of public libraries follow their policy totally; 35.1 percent of schools follow it; 41.8 percent of Christian colleges follow it. Public libraries follow their policies partially, 16.7 percent; schools, 26.9 percent; Christian colleges, 31.3 percent. Policies that aren't followed at all are: public libraries, 7.1 percent; schools, 22.4 percent; Christian colleges, 6.0 percent. Those who had no policy at all to follow:

public libraries, 14.3 percent; schools, 15.6 percent; Christian colleges, 17.9 percent.

A comparison of the results of challenges to library materials shows that materials are retained 73.8 percent of the time in public libraries, 36.8 percent of the time in public schools, and 61.1 percent of the time in Christian colleges. Materials are restricted: public libraries, 8.3 percent; schools, 22.0 percent; Christian colleges, 7.8 percent. Materials are altered: public libraries, 4.8 percent; schools, 3.8 percent; Christian colleges, 5.6 percent. Materials are removed: public libraries, 9.5 percent; schools, 36.8 percent; Christian colleges, 22.2 percent.

The official person or body who makes the final decision on reconsideration/censorship attempts varies considerably between types of libraries. The boards of directors of public libraries most often make the final decision, 76.9 percent of the time (librarians only 8.8 percent of the time). Public School boards of education most often make the decision, too, but barely, at 50.7 percent of the time. School administrators, usually principals, make the final decision 41.6 percent of the time; the librarian only 12.5 percent of the time. Christian college boards of trustees make such decisions only 6.3 percent of the time, however. The Christian college library director makes it most cases, 53.8 percent of the time. An administrator, usually the academic dean or president, makes it 23.8 percent of the time; professors, usually in a library committee, make it 21.3 percent of the time.

In the Southern survey, librarians were asked if they used the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Policy: 85.6 percent of public libraries indicated they did, and 49.3 percent of public schools indicated they did. In the Christian college survey, 41.0

percent indicated that the concepts of ALA's Library Bill of Rights were included in official library policy.

Challenges to library collections are constant, a recurring problem in all kinds of libraries: 44.9 percent of the public libraries in the south said they had experienced censorship challenges in the last four years; 30.9 percent of the public schools had had challenges in the same time period. According to this survey, 48.4 percent of Christian colleges had challenges in the last two years, 84.1 percent of which were from students. Public library challenges come most often from individuals representing themselves (97.4 percent), and most school challenges come from parents (73.8 percent).

The Missouri Survey

A survey of censorship in Missouri public schools was taken in 1989 by the Missouri Coalition Against Censorship,^{viii} a survey with a serious, nasty attitude problem, whose fear and loathing of conservative Christians leaks through in every other sentence and in sharply worded, extraneous sidebars. Nevertheless, a comparison of this survey with the Christian college survey shows similar statistics.

Fifty percent of Missouri schools had had censorship attempts in the last two years; 48.4 percent of Christian colleges had had them. Fifty percent of those attempts in Missouri succeeded; 35.6 percent of the attempts in Christian colleges succeeded.

Missouri schools having no reconsideration policy are 12 percent; 27.5 percent of Christian college libraries have none. Seventy percent of Missouri schools have a written policy approved by the board; only 13.6 percent of Christian college libraries have

board-approved policies, an obvious major difference (understandable, especially since many college boards of trustees meet only twice a year).

Missouri school resources were retained 78 percent of the time and removed or restricted 22 percent of the time when their written policies were followed; Christian college resources were retained 72.7 percent of the time and removed or restricted 20.4 percent of the time when their written policies were followed. When Missouri schools had no policy or did not follow one they had, resources were retained upon challenge only 38 percent of the time, and removed or restricted 62 percent of the time. A similar change was picked up in this Christian college survey. When Christian colleges have no policy, their resources were retained only 26.7 percent of the time, and removed or restricted 73.4 percent of the time. The importance of having a censorship policy cannot be overemphasized.

Collection Development Policy

Censorship Subsection

1. Basis for Intellectual Freedom^{ix}

In general, libraries throughout the United States support intellectual freedom, that is, the right of individuals to be informed about and to consider any idea or viewpoint. The very nature of our representational democracy demands an informed citizenry, and the right to hold and dispense unpopular views is integral to the freedom Americans share and believe is so important. Inherent in that freedom, however, is the necessity to allow ideas and viewpoints to be broadcast that are undesirable to some and perhaps even repugnant to many.

The Christian gospel is based on the freedom to choose. Jesus says, "Whosoever will may come." He does not impel us to choose Him. He does not restrict our choices so the path to God seems like the only way. In fact, the path each of us takes towards God's salvation is rife with other seemingly attractive choices, conflicting spiritual data and real world uncertainties. Implicit in this freedom is the danger that some will not choose our Savior. God takes that risk with us. Should we not take that same free and open approach towards our earthly fellow travelers who are unbelievers? Based on Jesus' teaching of the Golden Rule, if Christians have the right to censor the writings of atheists and non-Christians, then such groups should have the right to censor the Bible and other Judeo-Christian writings. Censorship of ideas inimical to Christianity is not the way to win the lost to the freedom that is

in Christ Jesus.

A corollary to the first intellectual freedom principle mentioned above is that both individuals and institutions in the society as a whole have the right to promote and advance any idea or viewpoint. To be truly free and to have an effective voice within society, individuals must have the right to unite and organize together to advance and promote their shared ideas and viewpoints. It follows that within an institution formed for such a purpose, e.g., a Christian College, there cannot be an unlimited right for individual members to promote any idea or viewpoint they please. Nor is there necessarily any inherent obligation on the part of institutions committed to a viewpoint to furnish their members with means, such as library resources, that inform about or promote contrary viewpoints. However, because of the freedom and non-compulsory nature of the Christian message, it is in the best interest of the Christian Church that Christian colleges provide strongly argued viewpoints and background information contrary to our own views as well as materials that support Christian faith and life. The nurture of Christian young adults in the faith requires a combination of Biblical Christian teaching and a body of knowledge about how the Christian faith has been challenged. Faith that is untested and unchallenged is likely to be a weak, ineffective faith, and it is especially important that potential Christian leaders receive an education that challenges them to think and to be able to reinterpret the Christian faith for their generation.

2. Affirmation Statement^x

It is important for collection development policies to include statements governing the

selection of controversial materials for the following reasons: 1) to fulfill our responsibilities as Christian educators to the Lord, our college program of education, our students, and our constituency; 2) to provide the faculty a clarification of the library side of academic freedom; and 3) to educate our students about the nature of the library's collection.

Implicit in the following principles is the conviction that library materials will be used by faculty members to present divergent views fully and fairly within a teaching context that expresses understanding of Biblical truth. We recognize our responsibility to help students develop a Christian world view and high moral standards of attitude and conduct. It is this distinctiveness that makes us what we are -- a Christian college.

As a Christian institution of higher learning, we must expose our students to both truth and error if we are to be honest as teachers. We recognize there is risk involved in this exposure, especially in the case of the immature and sensitive student. Nor can the conditions of exposure be completely controlled. But our efforts should be directed toward assisting our students to handle such material in a mature manner, rather than shielding them from it. To protect students from the knowledge of certain facts, as if pretending that they do not exist, is dishonest; furthermore, it fails to prepare them for meeting problem situations which they will undoubtedly encounter in their ministries. In order for them to be prepared for "life and service" they must know something of what life involves.

The study of a position merely for the purpose of impugning or refuting it does not constitute a responsible attitude of scholarship. Such an approach often leads to distortion and quotation out of context for the purpose of "proving" a point. Students need to learn that

erroneous systems contain elements of truth which they can recognize, although they may disagree with the basic assumption and practice of the system. Decisions need to be made with the best information we can gather, with the logic of the situation, and with an eye to the truth of Scripture. If we develop in students the ability to evaluate the difficult issues of life in that light, we teach them the Biblical injunction to "put on the whole armor of God" rather than to retreat from the world.

The selection policies of the library prefer that which is true and constructive, that which is in keeping with the college's doctrinal position. However, to limit acquisition to such materials would severely limit the library's accessions and diminish the college's educational capacity.

Controversial materials should be included on library shelves and reading lists for the purpose of providing alternative viewpoints on the major social and moral issues of the day and in the world throughout history. These would include publications of the cults, propaganda of various organizations and fiction and nonfiction presentations of moral and social problems.

The library adds materials to its collection that have social, educational and/or moral value. Pornography, while not specifically excluded, is likely to be added only in the most unusual of circumstances, since by definition pornography is material which has no redeeming social value and exists solely to demean or titillate. Keeping in mind the great arts and literatures of the world, the college realizes that mere depictions of nudity or moral depravity do not necessarily define such works as pornography.

In no case is it proper for a student or anyone else to act as a censor and unilaterally

mutilate works to delete objectionable visual, aural or written sections of library materials or to remove works perceived as objectionable from the library collection. Would-be censors are reminded that such actions are illegal.

3. Challenge Procedures

Library patrons may from time to time object to materials in the collection. A distinction should be made between formal and informal objections. Since most objections to Christian College library collections come from students, it may be assumed that many such requests are made out of a lack of information about intellectual freedom and/or an assumption that all library materials should support the institution's stated belief system. If so, the complaint may be handled by librarians informally by simply informing the student of library policy and the reasons behind it. A straightforward, informal discussion is all many objectors need since their questions are initiated because of a need for information, not because they are ideologically or peremptorily challenging the institution.

If the patron who is challenging library material is not satisfied with informal explanations and still wants the material removed from the library, a Formal Reconsideration Procedure should be initiated. The steps are as follows:

- 1) Give the patron a library materials reconsideration form to fill out. Explain that the total work must have been read before the reconsideration procedure can proceed. When the form is returned, check for completeness.

- 2) Circulate copies of the challenged material to members of the library committee for

them to read.

3) Convene the library committee (two librarians, academic dean, some/all division heads as appropriate, and the faculty member(s) responsible for purchase of the material in question and/or responsible for teaching the subject area).

4) Discuss the nature of the objection and whether the existence of the material in the library collection conforms to the collection development policy.

5) Inform the patron of the college's final determination (the committee's findings and decision) in writing.

Reconsideration Form^{xi}

Library User's Name _____ Date _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip _____ Phone _____

User Status: Student____ Faculty____ Staff____ Alumnus____
Parent____ General Public____

Material being reconsidered:

Author/Director/performer _____

Title _____

Type of Material: Book____ Periodical____ Film/Video____
Audio____ Other _____

How much of the item in question did you read, hear, view? _____

Please cite the specific section(s), e.g., page numbers, of the item which you found objectionable: _____

Please state why you believe this item is not appropriate for the library collection:

Please suggest a suitable alternative to this item that covers the same subject:

Library User's Signature _____

FOR LIBRARY USE ONLY

Date received:

Action Taken:

Notes

- i. S. J. Leon, "Book Selection in Philadelphia," Library Journal 98 (April 1, 1973): 1081-1089.
- ii. Ibid., 1088.
- iii. Ibid., 1089.
- iv. Ibid.
- v. Alvin M. Schrader, Margaret Herring, and Catriona de Scossa, "The Censorship Phenomenon in College and Research Libraries: An Investigation of the Canadian Prairie Provinces, 1980-1985," College & Research Libraries (July 1989): 420-432.
- vi. Sissy Kegley and Gene Guerrero, Censorship in the South; A Report of Four States, 1980-85, (American Civil Liberties Union, 1985), 1-24.
- vii. Ibid., 4.
- viii. Murray Underwood, Censorship Challenging Your Freedom: Censorship in Missouri Schools and School Libraries, 1988, (St. Louis: Missouri Coalition Against Censorship, 1989), 1-17.
- ix. Part of this section is based on survey comments made by Hans Bynagle, Library Director, Whitworth College, Spokane, Washington. Used by permission.
- x. This affirmation statement is based partly on the controversial materials policy adopted and in use at Western Baptist College, Salem, Oregon. Used by permission.
- xi. Reconsideration form based largely on the "Challenged Materials Form" in use at John Brown University, Siloam Springs, Arkansas. Used by permission.